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STUDENT UNION PUBLICATION

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STET, NO. NUMBER 1

JANUARY 1951

A University of Alberta  
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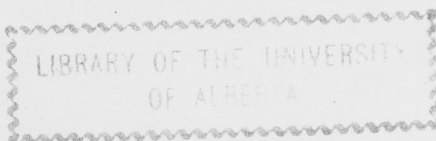
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STRT

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Students' Union Publication

Volume 3

1950





# STET

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A UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
STUDENTS' UNION PUBLICATION

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# Editorial . . .

**I**N OUR LAST issue we promised the shortest of editorials for this one, and can do no better than remember our promise. Besides, the pressure of a busy life leaves all too little time to ponder the problems of the world, particularly when every other editor has already settled them with a firmness we envy. We therefore refer you to the very best of magazines—the editorial page of any magazine will tell you which one that is—for the divine pronouncements we are unable to supply.

Meanwhile we have been devoting our meagre spare time to an hilarious and naughty volume which came to our desk the other day and fell by chance on top of the serious texts we were supposed to

read. We confess to being a little slow in realizing it was not the introductory volume to **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire**, and by that time we had read it and it was too late. *Turvey*, as the book is called, was written by Professor Birney, whose more conventional work lies with the English Department at the University of British Columbia, and is the story of one Thomas Leadbeater Turvey while he suffers “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” that beset him in the Canadian Army. We confidently predict that it will replace *The History of Philosophy* on every veteran’s bookshelf. It is laughter fit for the gods.



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# TOWN PLANNING

## To Meet Alberta's Present and Future Problems . . .

By H. S. RAGAN

(Editor's note: Mr. Ragan's essay is the third prize winner in our recent STET contest. First and second prize winning essays will be published in subsequent issues).

The object of town planning in Alberta should be the production of an efficient, practical and beautiful urban centre, by the use of existing structures as a nucleus, and by the reasonable regulation and planning of future construction.

Visionary blueprints, expensive models, and large budgets are too often the symbols of grandiose schemes for the complete elimination of all contemporary city systems, and the substitution of a new, glistening, speeding, completely streamlined super-metropolis. We in Alberta must face the facts, that probably not in our lifetime, nor in our children's, will we have any cities of over a million people, nor can we afford to condemn our achievements to date, and start all over in planning the municipal layout which will serve both today and for tomorrows to come.

If a town planner were told to commence the building of a town of a certain population in a district where no town existed, his job would be much simpler than it is in reality, for town planners in Alberta are faced with an accomplished fact—most townsites have already been chosen and built upon. The population of these towns have decided on the site; railway and highway service have, for the most part, been provided and the town is there to stay, and probably to grow.

Small towns are usually images of one another—a railway, one main (and usually dusty) street flanked on both sides by businesses, a scattering of private homes,

a school, and two churches. Unless there is a regional economic change in the livelihood of the people (such as an oil strike), the town's population will likely never grow to any great extent beyond what it is at present, and the need of engaging a town planner is questionable.

There are, however, some principles of town planning which every village would be well advised to take note of and to follow.

Nearly every townsite has some potentialities for landscaping and beautifying. Happily, most towns are located near running water. The banks of these streams provide unequalled opportunities for planting trees and grass and providing shade and greenery—a desirability in our prairie towns. Land bordering these streams should be set aside by the town council as parkland, and measures should be taken to prevent fouling the streams with sewage, garbage, or industrial wastes. If the site is on a bank overlooking a stream, the edge of the valley provides a ready-made location for a curved street, to follow the course of the stream, and at some future date, to be lined with trees.

The two most common systems of city layout are the rectangular grid, in which all streets cross each other at right angles, and the radial, which resembles a spoked wheel with the business district as the hub. The rectangular grid, while a straight forward simple surveying problem, tends toward drabness and monotony, and more important, takes no account of traffic moving diagonally across the city. The absence of a large movement of traffic within the townsite, and the lower initial and maintenance costs, admirably suit this system to a small municipality. The radial

system provides good accommodation for traffic both entering and leaving the business district, but its curved circumferential streets are considerably more difficult to survey and construct, and are thus more expensive. The curved street, too, has the disadvantage of complicating the distribution of utilities, which are, after all, services that all municipalities—large or small—look toward as evidences of urban communities.

Alberta townsites are almost exclusively surveyed on the rectangular grid, usually paralleling the ever-important railway, and modified somewhat to suit the topography. Usually a street has been surveyed parallel to the railway and from 150 to 200 feet from it. It is desirable that this land be retained as a buffer of parkland. In order to provide trackage for businesses, provision should be made for commercial lots on the opposite side of the tracks, as it is usual for the large part of the town to develop on one side of the railway. Early in the stages of planning, an agreement should be made with the railway company as to the location and extent of any future sidings and yards. In the event that the parkland is already partially built upon, a zoning by-law should prohibit further construction there, and existing structures should be razed when their usefulness is at an end.

From the standpoint of supplying utilities to businesses and residential homes, it is desirable that the town be as compact as possible. A good plan is to use the row of blocks paralleling the railway as business premises, the next 2 or 3 rows (depending on the size of the town) away from the railway as residential sites and rows thereafter as small acreages, suitable for large scale gardening. In late years, it has been found desirable to bypass the actual townsite when constructing provincial highways. In the event that the turnoff from the highway must cross the railway to enter the town, or where a street already crosses it, provision should be made for a future grade separation. For a large city, the radial system of street layout has much to commend it. The radial streets provide for uninterrupted traffic flow both to and from the business district and by allowing for a

circular belt of parkland, complete segregation of residential and commercial districts can be obtained.

The city planner will, of course, be faced with the necessity of modifying any regular system of streets and avenues, lots and blocks, to fit the topography of the site suitably. This will automatically provide the city with at least a few curved streets and boulevards which will considerably relieve the monotony of the formal system. On sloping sites, the tendency is toward streets which follow the contour of the land, each street being higher or lower than the next. This will necessarily increase the cost of providing and maintaining streets and utilities but offers magnificent opportunities for landscaping the street as well as private homes. This type of subdivision, therefore, lends itself very well to the location of a high class residential zone.

If any progress is to be made in the beautifying of a town, a plan must eventually be reached and adhered to, otherwise all effort will have been wasted. Any such town plan need not be rigidly binding for the future. In coming years, it is possible, even probable, that the plan should be altered in the light of some new mineral find or sudden growth in population due to nearby industrial development. No one can accurately predict today what an urban population will be tomorrow but, by taking all factors into account, a figure can be reached—an estimate which is actually only an enlightened guess. With this in mind, it is possible, and highly desirable, to produce a town plan that will meet today's problems and tomorrow's, and still be beautiful, practical, and economical.

In order that the plan shall be legally binding, by-laws should be passed by the town council designating the various types of areas—by lots or blocks—and should be enforced. One has only to look at Alberta's larger cities to see town plans which are regularly abrogated, either by unrestricted building or by short sighted councils making exceptions to zoning by-laws. The latter may result in construction of a few nice buildings now, but in years to come the same buildings will be found to be a thorn in the city's side, because of increased traffic congestion.



The question of lot size has been poorly dealt with in the past. The 33-foot lot has been the main contributing factor in the crowding of our residential areas. Land in this part of the world is certainly not at such a premium that we cannot afford big enough lots to leave more than just a corridor between homes. The standard residential lot should be 50 feet wide, and 140 feet long, giving blocks 300 feet wide with a 20-foot service lane in the centre. Houses closer to the property line than 10 feet should be prohibited, both as a fire precaution and to allow for good distribution of natural light. This greater width of lot will increase the cost of utilities to a small extent, but this will be more than offset by the increased safety and increased garden acreage.

Whenever possible, lots should be serviced with utilities from the lane, leaving streets free from unsightly poles, excepting at corners where street lights will probably be needed. It has been found that a block length of about 600 feet is best for residential districts, and slightly less for business blocks.

Having planned the size of lots and blocks, the next consideration should be street widths. Any street which carries a good deal of traffic, such as the main street of a small town and the secondary street which crosses it, should be wide enough to carry four lanes of traffic as a minimum, with angle parking along both curbs and a centre strip to divide the street. Allowing four traffic lanes of 12 feet each, a centre strip of 4 feet, and 15 feet at each curb for angle parking, a main street should be at least 82 feet from curb to curb. Angle parking has been chosen as the most efficient, and although 15 feet may seem a large allowance, it must be remembered that a great deal of motor traffic in towns and cities is large commercial and farm trucks.

In wholesale districts in larger cities, streets should be wide enough to allow for four central lanes of moving traffic with 25 feet on each side for on-street loading, giving a street width of almost 100 feet, omitting the centre strip in these areas. The increased cost of providing this wider parking area should be raised by taxes on the premises bordering the loading zone.

The property owners concerned may object to the higher taxes, but they have only to consider that if the city did not allow on-street loading, they would have to provide their own loading areas in a section of the city where land prices are high. Thus, a private loading dock would be on the first floor of a building, and certainly more expensive than the added cost of a wider street. Secondary commercial streets should be wide enough for two traffic lanes, and angle parking on each side; residential streets slightly narrower, using parallel instead of angle parking. In residential districts, sidewalks should be set back about 9 feet from the curb, and the intervening boulevard planted to grass and trees, the latter about 30 feet apart. Although the care of trees will be a municipal responsibility, it should be the legally defined duty of every home-owner to care for the lawn on the boulevard fronting his lot.

The question of street surfacing is a contentious one at the present time. The results of experiments now being carried on in Edmonton — testing so-called rigid and flexible paving — will be of great value to city planners. This one point is certainly agreed on by all: wherever economically possible, some type of hard surface should be laid, especially on main streets. In small towns it is likely that the oiled type of gravel road will prove the best from the standpoint of economy, dust prevention and wear.

In the layout of a residential area, provision must be made for schools, community halls, tennis courts, playgrounds and swimming pools. Schools should occupy at least one full block depending on the school size, in order to have room for baseball diamonds and football grids. Community halls, tennis courts, playgrounds, and swimming pools can all be advantageously located on one whole block—centrally situated in the district to be served. Any site thought of as a future hospital location should be close to, but not necessarily in, the residential portion of the town or city in order to be in a quiet zone, and should be separated from adjoining buildings by at least three lots planted to trees and grass. Buildings housing utilities, such as treatment and pumping stations for water and disposal plants for sewage,

should be on the outskirts of a small town, and centrally located in the industrial or commercial district of a larger city. If the town is located on the banks of a stream or river, the sewage and water treatment plants will likely be located near the water's edge. The effluent sewage, after proper treatment, should be disposed of as far from town as possible—whether by dumping into a river, or by sludge beds and cesspools.

In order that a sufficient number of main traffic arteries can be allowed for in laying out a plan for a city, a study of traffic behaviour within the city should be made by competent engineers. The results of this study and the recommendations advanced by the traffic engineers should be used as a basis for the planning of provision for handling the main flow of traffic. In larger centres, arterial freeways are definitely desirable because, by providing fast, unobstructed travel for transit vehicles as well as passenger cars, they permit the almost complete segregation of business and residential districts. If the freeways are of a limited access nature, an increased speed limit will further reduce the traffic problem by making it possible for a medium size roadway to carry a maximum number of vehicles in any given time. From the viewpoint of economy, this is the ultimate in highway design — an artery operating at capacity whenever possible. Because of the habits of civilized peoples, such freeways must be capable of carrying the peak loads, which occur in the morning, at noon, and at supertime, and to a lesser extent in the early evening.

Traffic arteries should be so located as to provide uninterrupted flow in at least two directions approximately at right angles to each other — that is, a square townsite should have arteries diagonally across the city. There is, however, no justification for smoother traffic flow toward the business district if no provision is made for parking the large number of vehicles involved. This can best be accomplished by off-street parking, either publicly or privately owned. It is doubtful if the appearance of parking meters on Alberta streets has alleviated the parking problem to any noticeable extent, the only

factor seemingly in their favor being that they provide a source of revenue which could assist with off-street parking. This alone will probably be used to justify their increased use in the future. Whenever possible, city highways should by-pass schools, or, if the highways are already constructed, schools should not be built near them. This is not only for the added safety of school children, but because the lower speed usually allowed in school zones hinders the flow of traffic and tends toward congestion.

In smaller Alberta towns and cities which depend largely on agriculture for their sustenance, the movement of local traffic across the town itself is not large, but the influx and efflux of farm vehicles, predominantly trucks, is often enough to jam the streets and make parking a problem. Every town in which farm produce is marketed (and in Alberta this leaves few exceptions), should have a central parking place capable of holding at least a hundred vehicles. The more central the lot is, the more the businesses of the town will benefit. This will alleviate the parking problem and eliminate centre parking, which is a dangerous and foolish practice from the standpoint of utility and public safety, as well as hindering the through traffic.

All urban residents would like to be serviced with utilities—light, fuel, water, and sewer. In smaller towns, light is usually provided by a large power company, and in larger cities, by a municipal department. Fuel, in the form of abundant natural gas, is also a privately owned enterprise, leaving water and sewer systems to the councils of smaller towns. The question of how far, and of what capacity to build these systems has been the subject of much technical literature in the past, and one thing seems clear — the system should be large enough to carry any expected increase in population for at least ten, and preferably fifteen years. Longer periods would be desirable, but hardly fair to the present day tax-payer, and probably not economically feasible. Any period smaller than this would result in expensive additions to the system at frequent intervals, and in the final analysis would be poor economy. Compact townsites are the most easily serviced, and town councils



should make it a practice not to extend services to outer zones unless the inner zones of the same class are fairly well filled in. If this rule were not followed, a city utility could extend itself to bankruptcy very quickly.

The finishing touches to a municipal plan are the landscaping of avenues, boulevards, parks and playgrounds. Centre strips on main streets should be planted in grass and small flowers, and boulevards in grass, and shade trees. Types of trees are largely dependent on taste and locality, but the Russian Poplar should be avoided as it becomes a nuisance in the spring by covering the ground with unsightly fluff. The responsibility for the necessary upkeep of parks rests with the town. This upkeep need not be expensive, for water is fairly cheap and pruning of trees is an infrequent necessity, but the money involved is well

spent by increasing the beauty and livability of the town.

All the principles and ideas of town planning which have been put forth here will cost money—let no one be mistaken about that. But a well planned and beautiful town or city costs but little more than a crowded, inefficient one, and who is to put a money value on cheerful, healthful surroundings and on abundance of sunshine and clean air?

There is one fact town planners should always keep foremost in mind—that although they work daily with streets and boulevards, plans and estimates, maps and traffic studies, the things with which they deal most are people — their wants and wishes, habits and customs, eccentricities and shortcomings, and that only with due regard for the human factor can planning best be done to meet Alberta's present and future problems.



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# OBITUARY



Old Man Stepanovitch sat in the sun on the "prispa" in front of his house. Occasional gusts of the spring wind played with strands of his fine white hair.

The mischievous spring breezes jested with the wispy smoke, making it puff out now from one end, now from the other, of the blue-black T-pipe chimney which surmounted the "gingerbread" house. The breezes came sweeping up the little hillock upon which the house very squarely stood, they brushed over the bright green blades of grass like fingers of a giant hand passing through a head of close-cropped hair, then rustled aimlessly through the seared straw of the faded brown "stricha" (thatch), like a little grey mouse scampering excitedly through crackling bullrushes. Light whiffs of wind sped noisily amidst the newly budded leaves of the great poplar and shook the slender branches of the willows clustered near the house. The breezes scampered heedlessly about the grassy hillock startling the trees and the grass and the "stricha." Only the gingerbread house and Old Man Stepanovitch remained unperturbed.

The house stood as it had done every spring for forty years. Whitewashed and thatched, it fitted into the grassy hill as a yellow-crowned daisy fits into a green meadow. There it stood — a green door chaperoned by two green framed, four-paned windows set in an expanse of white wall, its whiteness sparkling against the green background of trees, the weather-beaten, orange-brown "stricha" looking less drab when framed by the blue spring sky, the hard form of the T-pipe chimney momentarily outlined against the fleecy softness of a white cloud, a wisp of blue-grey smoke curling aimlessly toward the heavens. There the house stood: beautiful — and practical. For all around the walls, from

the ground up as high as a goose could reach, and higher than a chicken could peck, ran a broad coat of brown clay which could not be scarred as whitewash could by marauding barnyard fowl. Lower still, running right around the house as a protection against the scratching and burrowing of restless cats and dogs, was a low mound of earth—the "prispa".

Old Man Stepanovitch sat in the sun on the "prispa" in front of his house as he had done every fine spring day for the past five years. He had his curved pipe in his mouth; his cane lay beside him. He sat on the "prispa", toil-worn shoulders hunched over, white-crowned head nodding, eyes attentive in his tanned, care-lined face. In his scarred and calloused hands he held a well-worn book. His mighty moustache twitched as he read, moving his lips. Every fine spring day for five years now, ever since he had rented his land and stopped working, Old Man Stepanovitch had sat in the sun and read.

He loved to read. He had read the few books at his disposal over and over. Yet as a boy in the old country, he had been unable to read because he had never gone to school. "I didn't learn to read and write until after I was married," he used to say. "It was because a villager laughed when, after our marriage, I was unable to sign the church register, that I swore I would learn to read and write. Oh, how I studied at nights! But it was worth it." When the dam of illiteracy had been broken, the old man's pursuit of knowledge flowed unbounded. Whenever he had time, he read. But whereas formerly he had been able to read only during spare moments, he could now sit in the sun on the "prispa" and read all day.

And when people marvelled at his accomplishments, Old Man Stepanovitch



would say, "Scho ya! looch-eh spornyant Shevchenka— What of me! Better to speak of Shevchenko, Ukraine's greatest poet. Here was a man! He was a serf, a slave until he was twenty-four. An orphan, whose mother died while he was but an infant and whose father had felt the whips of the lord's men. A man who spent twelve of his forty-seven years in prisons and in Siberia. Yet this man made himself one of the greatest poets of the Slavonic world!"

The old man would bow his head and silently trace meaningless figures in the dust with the end of his cane. Then suddenly he would raise his head. "But how many of our children know of Shevchenko? How many know of the people he stood for? How many know the people he speaks of? We have come to a country where we have at last found homes and freedom—and our children are forgetting their ancestors who fought and worked for centuries to keep their little pieces of land. They forget that we have a history and a culture. They forget that our broad steppes were the barriers between the hordes of the east and the civilization of western Europe. This country gave us land and homes—we will die without giving it anything."

The old man would ponder in such a vein for days, and always he would eventually turn to his wife and say, "Mary, I'm glad our son is not ashamed of his people."

"John is a good son," Mary would say. Her eyes would grow sad. "But it has been a long time since we have seen him."

"Toronto is far, Mary, and lawyers are always so busy. Give him time. He'll come. Besides, he has a family of his own to look after now. The baby must be quite a lad by now. Oh, if our grandson were only here! I could tell him such stories." Always, their conversation about their son ended with the old man saying, "Oh, if our grandson were here!"

The children walking past from school often saw Old Man Stepanovitch sitting on his "prispá". Sometimes they stopped to talk to him. Then the old man would give them candy (he always had candy for the children), and he would tell them stories.

Oh, the "kazkih" (stories) the old man knew! He would tell them "kazkih" that

none of them had ever heard before—all about "Lys Mikita" (Mikita, the fox) who always outwitted Brisko, the dog. And the story of the cat and the rooster who decided to live together, and how the wily fox kidnapped the rooster, and then how the cat took his fiddle, a mallet, and an embroidered knapsack and went to rescue his friend. Oh, the old man could tell "kizkih"! But the children could not often stay to hear him. Reluctantly they passed by the gate, hurrying, because their parents had ordered them to "come straight home after school." And the old man, watching his youthful friends hurrying by, would shake his head and say, "Oh, if my grandson were here! I could talk to him all day long."

And thus Old Man Stepanovitch would sit on the "prispá" and read, and think, and dream. As the sun rose high in the sky and moved across the heavens, so the old man would move along the side of the house till in the evening he reached the west wall where he would sit, watching the sun go down. Sometimes he would sit just watching the sun, and sometimes he would sing.

Old Man Stepanovitch loved to sing. When one of his musical moods came upon him, he was transformed. He would throw back his hunched shoulders. He would raise his hoary head and throw out his barrel chest. Then his rich, powerful tenor would flow out on the evening air, and neighbours' children two or three miles away would run into their houses calling, "Mother, Old Man Stepanovitch is singing tonight." And all the neighbours agreed that the old man had a splendid voice.

"Ah, you should have heard me when I was young!" the old man would say. "If you had heard the men's choir in our village! We couldn't sing in the village hall for fear the walls would come down. So on Sunday evenings we would gather outside to sing. They used to hear us at Snyatin, six miles away."

The old man would pause for a moment. "Young people don't sing as we used to. Oh, they have good voices. But they sing songs that will never last, songs that come and go like the months of the year. Ours were the songs of a people. You need more than a good voice to sing a song."

You have to have it in here," he would say, tapping his breast. "You have to sing from the heart."

Sometimes the old man would grow sad. "The young people don't sing our songs any more," he would say. "Our songs that tell the history of a people. Songs which are as beautiful as the Ukraine, as impressive as the steppes, as glorious as the Cossacks, and as sad as the lonely maidens they speak of. Songs which the 'Kobzars' (the bards) sang for hundreds of years—and they are being forgotten." And neighbours often heard his sigh, "If only my grandson were here! How I would like to teach him our songs!"

There were three songs which Old Man Stepanovitch sang with more feeling than any others. When he was happy, he would sing, "Oy Pid Hayem Hayem" — a song about young people dancing in the orchard. The powerful tenor voice would flippantly cast the jolly notes into the air to dance and frolic among the hills until worn and exhausted they faded into silence. Then the faces of those who heard him brightened and even the sunset seemed to be cheerier.

But when the old man felt thoughtful and melancholy, the neighbours heard another song. Then the words of Shevchenko, set to music, drifted over the evening air, to tell of the Dnieper roaring and moaning, of elm trees creaking in the wind, and of a moon which appeared and disappeared between ominous clouds like a boat that rises and falls on the waves of a stormy sea.

But it was when Old Man Stepanovitch was sad that his song was most moving. It was not often that people heard it, for the old man was seldom sad. But when he was, the words of the ballad of "Stenka Razin" would float hauntingly through the air. The slow, moving words seemed to wander among the hills, sad and lonely, far from their native land, telling of the Cossack Stenka Razin and his painted galleys boldly sweeping up the Volga. The haunting notes seemed to echo mournfully along the winding valleys, sobbing out their story of the Persian princess who was thrown overboard by Razin to prevent dissension among the Cossacks. And when the last note died out, the neighbours would

look at each other and say, "The Old Man will not sleep easily tonight."

One night Old Man Stepanovitch sat in the "prispa" on the west side of the house. His shoulders were thrown back, his head was erect. His rich voice reached for the succeeding higher notes of "Oy Pid Hayem, Hayem." Alex Harasim, bringing in a pail of water for his wife, said, "Old Man Stepanovitch sounds happier tonight than I've ever heard him. I wonder what he's so happy about?"

"Haven't you heard?" his wife replied. "His son is coming to visit him with his family. He's expecting him tomorrow."

"It's about time!" muttered Alex. "The Old Man worked for years to put John through the University and the boy hasn't come to see his father even once in nine years."

But Old Man Stepanovitch, lying helpless in his bed, found his thoughts going from his son to his daughter-in-law and always stopping with his grandson. What fun he and the boy would have together! He was eight years old now — old enough to be interested in "kazki" and tales of the Cossacks and little songs. They might even stay two months! Then he and the boy would get to be real friends—and afterwards, wouldn't they just give the mail man something to do! All night he tossed about in his bed. The next day he wandered about restlessly until a car drove into the yard. Excited, he and his wife ran to meet it.

The son, the daughter-in-law, the grandson stepped out of the car. The greetings were those of people long parted—a mixture of joy and tears, sobs and laughter, happiness and anxiety.

"Ah, children," said the old man, "it's so good to see you again after all these years." They shook hands and kissed, then embraced and kissed again.

The little boy stood by, bewildered. The old man turned toward him, arms outstretched, "Vnoochko moy! Chodih do Dida sinkood (My little grandson! Come to your grandfather, my boy!)" There were tears in the old man's eyes.

The boy did not move.

"Ne vstydaysya sinoo! Chodih do Dida! (Do not be shy, son! Come to grandpa!)"

The boy stood motionless.

Old Man Stepanovitch heard his son's voice, hesitant and confused. "Father, John cannot speak the language. We thought it would be best for him . . ."

The old man stood dazed. Slowly he bent down, picked up the boy in his arms, and held him close. For some time he did not speak. Then his eyes brightened and he asked anxiously, "You'll be staying a while—a month, two maybe?"

"No, father," the son's wife answered. "We can stay only for a week. John has to be back for a convention in three weeks' time—and we promised some friends we'd stop in on the way home."

"Yes. Yes." The very wrinkles seemed to deepen in the old man's face. He sighed, and his voice was gentle, "Come, let us go into the house."

"Yes," echoed his wife, "let us go in."

No one heard Old Man Stepanovitch sing all that week. But the next Monday, just as the sun balanced on the evening horizon, the neighbours heard his last song. It was the ballad of Stenka Razin echoing among the hills more sadly and more mournfully than they had ever heard it before. And as the song reached them, some of them felt the wind freshen, and looked into the west to see a host of clouds, brilliantly colored by the setting sun, racing toward them across the deep blue of the sky like Stenka Razin's painted galleys. The wind grew stronger and stronger, and some men thought the Old Man's song died out as the cries of the Persian Princess might have done when Razin threw her into the Volga.



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# Life In A Small Town

» » » » by G. W. Robertson « « « «

(Editor's note: As an introduction to our series of articles on particular towns in Alberta, we present this picture of any or all towns. Mr. Robertson has, in fact, presented the places and people that, nameless here, will have special names and significances in the articles that are to follow).

If you are unfamiliar with the ways of a small town, your first spell of living in one may seem like a plunge into cold water. When a stranger you first came as a teacher, a clerk in the bank or in one of the stores, a stenographer, a station agent, a domestic worker or what have you. At first you may have felt that the old-timers of the place were resentful of your presence and perfectly dull with their afternoon teas and bridge games, their poker parties and seeming indifference to anything outside the small town itself. In time, however, you found yourself becoming part of the community, discharging certain duties in your own right, perhaps as secretary of our Board of Trade, which is composed of ten or fifteen men; perhaps as chairman of the school fair committee, since we were unable to persuade anyone else to take the position; or you may have the honor of coaching our baseball team which, we assure you, defeated all the neighboring town teams last season; if you are a lady, you will probably have had honors heaped upon you as president or secretary of several of our ladies' organizations, from Women's Institute to a lodge sorority. At length you find that our town is becoming part of you even as it has done before to all the rest of its inhabitants.

Then let us look at this small town which invites no one to its midst; which accepts those who come because it must, but which in time has a warm spot for all; where anybody knows everybody else's family history; where scandal and honor are divided about equally; where all citizens from the bank manager and the school inspector to the ditch digger and the road worker are of consequence; where the most ig-

norant speaks with a wisdom that confounds the learned, and the most vindictive learn to forgive in a manner that is akin to godliness.

First we see its main street extending in a straight line for two or three blocks, with cement sidewalks on both sides (how proud we were when they were first laid—like in a big city—and we can easily remember when the best we had were of wood). At one end of this street is the railway station, and lined up on both sides are the business places of the town—the grocery and hardware stores, the machine agencies, the drug store, the post office, the bank and the pool hall. Oh yes, that imposing looking building that you see is the hotel, which is just our nice way of saying the beer parlor. Along the railway track which runs roughly at right angles to the main street stand the grain elevators. In Alberta the number of elevators furnishes a good means for estimating the size of the town. The remaining businesses will include the stockyards beside the railway for the cattle buyers, service stations at suitable sites to serve passing motorists, and others that we will list as miscellaneous—the drayman, the water carrier, the radio repair man, the school janitor and the rest. The schoolhouse stands just a bit off the main road and at the side of the town proper. We have four churches, any one of which is big enough to accommodate all churchgoers in the town—and which does so for a funeral.

Having set the stage for our unending drama, we must next proceed to tell something about our characters. First are the old timers, those who have been with the little town so long that in all probability they remember the men who laid out the townsite. This number will include the business men, the elevator operators, the lawyer (if we have one), the municipal secretary and the jack of all trades, who will do any odd job from painting a house to digging a grave. Next in line for consideration are those who stay for a few years at most. Such are the school in-

spectors and teachers, the bank managers and members of the bank staff, the doctor, the priests and church ministers, station agents and telephone operators. The last great group are those who come and go—oil workers and farm help, truck drivers and domestic help, travelling salesmen and evangelists. All of these groups are in a constant state of flux while each is changing at its own rate and in its own way. To the old timers, some of those who were with us for only a short while are always very much a part of the town.

Having introduced the characters, we are now ready to get under way with our unending story, the beginning of which was never written. One thing is certain—the school concerns us all. Some teachers come and go, others remain, for they are just as likely to get married and make their home in our small town as in any other. Be that as it may, we are all ready to find fault with the teacher and the teacher's methods, the teacher's habits, whether or not the teacher smokes or drinks. Further, with regard to the school we are quite certain that the janitor is lax in his work, that the water supply in the school is unsanitary and that some of the goings on at school were unheard of in our time, and we hold up our hands in horror. Our final shots we hold for the members of the board of trustees and their endless blundering. Once in a while we will note something that has been well done and grudgingly extend a word of praise.

Every few years we will take part in an election either federal or provincial. Though for a brief interval at such times we may all be fools in the eyes of followers of the parties opposed to ours, this fact in no way upsets the long-term harmony of the community.

The open forum is an accepted part of our community. During the hot summer days, when the sun is a scorching heat, the male part of the population will be seated in front of the places of business on the shady side of main street. Then the tall tales are told over again — hot spells of days gone by when so-and-so suffered sun stroke, how the bumper crop was harvested a few years back, and the great deeds of daring that had been performed in different places. In the winter time the topics

and the scene may be altered, but the principle is the same. Around the hot stoves in the stores the same groups assemble while the thermometer drops lower and lower. Then colder days of winters past are recalled for the hundredth time and gain new lustre by the retelling; then the talents of local stars of hockey or baseball are compared to the champions of the National League while the boys and men munch peanuts and smoke.

Sport is a great common bond. It is a great experience to be an interested party in small town rivalry. A game between the Mud Creek Mules and the Dirty Dicks from the neighboring small town puts a game between Calgary and Edmonton, or for that matter a game between New York and Brooklyn, to shame.

Most of the men in our town will be interested in curling or hockey, in baseball or golf. One or other or both lodges is part of the lives of many of our men while the ladies make up a ladies' subsidiary of the men's lodge. We have a charming set-up in our lodge whereby the ladies meet on the same night as the men in a different part of of the lodge hall. By this means we arrange for the serving of our lunches at the opportune times.

There are big days in our town. Easter is perhaps a good one to start on, for then it seems that the icy hand of winter has at long last set us free, the ladies are out with their new bonnets and the boys have started baseball practice. Follows May 24 with a big celebration and school let out, which in turn is followed almost immediately by the stampede on July 1st. The ladies of each of the churches must have a day for their annual dinner, to which all citizens of our town feel in duty bound to go. Thanksgiving marks the celebration for autumn and we save our ideas from then till Christmas, when once more we all celebrate as best we can.

That, then, is life in a small town. Babies are born, grow up, grow old and die. Young people meet and fall in love. Most of them get married and establish homes. A few of these break up, but life goes on through an endless succession of triumphs and disasters. The time is any time. The place is the one we love the most—our old home town.

# THE LIVING LYRE

By PETER M. ROBERTS

Miss Hodgins, who taught him in the third grade, thought it unfortunate that Sten Petersen had been born at all. She never confessed as much publicly, for such revelations are unprofessional, but she tried to forget that he was in her class, and since he never drew attention to himself either by asking or answering questions, she had been largely successful. Sometimes the boy's continued silence forced itself into Miss Hodgins's field of awareness, and she would examine his face for a moment—but only for a moment, since it was a stupid face, and showed small interest in what she was saying.

Unlike Miss Hodgins, Ole Petersen did not think it unfortunate that his son had been born, but he did regret that the event had occurred in 1923, for Sten's tenth year, and the hardest times that Ole had ever fallen upon, coincided exactly.

The two of them, Ole and Sten, lived together in a tax-free shack just outside the city limits. Ole, according to his own description, was "just a rough carpenter," which meant that he earned a precarious living building fences, clothes-lines and dog kennels for the few who could afford them in those years. Times were better when he and his wife first came out from Sweden. They had built the shack as a temporary arrangement, and Ole had been able to find work without great difficulty. She died when Sten was born, though, and left Ole with what, to him, were the gigantic tasks of raising a son, learning a new way of life, and making a living. Ten years after her death, if he had had some success in the first task, and was barely succeeding at the third, he had been an utter failure at fitting himself into his new environment.

The language mystified him completely,

and he soon gave up trying to learn more than the words and phrases which were absolutely necessary. A tremendous beard, which had marked him as something of a dandy in his own village, marked him in the new setting as a crackpot, and an object of derision. He steadfastly refused to give up his baggy britches and long black stockings, or to dent his hat at the top. School children, laughing and hooting at his appearance, had no effect upon him. They were not his kin nor his countrymen, and when he thought of their laughter at all, he thought of it as a reflection upon them and their country, but not upon him or his. Ole's answer to the scorn which was heaped upon him was simply to devote himself to his son, and to his home, and to forgetting about a society which he did not understand or wish to understand.

Young Sten was not much better off. He had lived so long with his father, and known no one else, that he found his school society noisy and barren of meaning. Into his son's mind Ole had managed to drive a few principles which served as religion and practical philosophy, but which isolated the boy from his schoolmates as effectively as his father's britches and stockings would have done, had he worn them to school. Those in his class who were wealthier found ample scope for their wit in Sten's worn blue sweater and gaping trousers; the others, who could not hoot at his clothing without deriding their own, amused themselves with his accent, his silence, or what Miss Hodgins, one day when he was not at school, referred to indignantly as "his downright stupidity." Like his father, Sten resented none of these attacks, but tried to avoid them by staying with Ole as much as he could.



The secret of happiness, Ole often told him, is work. "No madder ef you got som ting to do or not," he said to his son, "jus work, und you vill do vine." Ole practised this philosophy, and gently insisted that his son do the same. The shack became a perfect treasure of odds and ends, some with and some without utility, but all produced by the joint efforts of Sten and his father. Tiny figures of dogs "like dem at home wid liddle snouts and nod moch ears," cats with vacancies in their backs where Ole planted a cactus to simulate a tail, horses, reindeer, sailing ships in bottles, and quaint but unrecognizable creatures, decorated every ledge and shelf in the two rooms. Woolen spreads and covers were on every piece of furniture in the building, for Ole had discovered that he could buy, very cheaply, knitted garments at the church bazaar, and after some weeks of unravelling and washing, knit the wool into almost anything he wanted. When one set of wool was finished, Ole simply bought another garment and went on with his knitting. The variegated colors, he felt, added charm.

One bitter January afternoon the boy arrived home from school with what, for him, was a remarkable look of exuberance on his face. Ole noticed immediately a bulge under his son's ragged jacket, and assumed that the boy had found a bit of lumber or a discarded book which he had brought home to add to the family's treasures.

"Now den, what haf you god utter de swedder?" he demanded. A bit of lumber would have pleased him best, for he loved to work with it.

"Look!" exclaimed the son, and from beneath the jacket (all outer garments were "swedder" to the old man) he drew a cheap, obviously warped violin. An amateur would have recognized the instrument as unfit for playing, but it did have a frame and four strings. Sten's eyes shone with excitement as he displayed his prize. He held it up to the light, ran a finger along the wood, and blew off a speck of dust.

Ole eyed the fiddle with distrust. "Whar are you getting it from?" he questioned sharply, fearing the boy had stolen it.

"I got it at school, Dad," replied the boy.

"Someone sent it over, and no one else wanted it, so they gave it to me."

"What yo got to do wid dat ting?" asked his father, making no move to examine it. "We got too much woork for anytin like dat. Yus you tek it back to school agin."

"Oh but Dad," said the boy, alarmed. "I want to learn to play. Look, it makes nice music." And he produced the bow from under his jacket. Grasping the instrument tightly in one grubby fist, he drew the bow across a string. "See?"

"Dat ain't no good for us here," grumbled the old fellow. Then he became sterner. "Now yus you tek it back in the morning; we're got lots to do wittout dat."

"Oh but Dad, just let me keep it for a while. I want to learn to play on it. It makes beautiful music once you know how to play it." The old man could never resist the pleading in his son's voice.

"Well, den, you keep it for a while, but I don't want dat noise in de house notime, and yus you don't play it when you ought to be workin'."

"Okay, Dad." He had known from the start who would win. "I won't bother you with it."

It was not long before the old man knew he had been right from the first. The boy lost all interest in his work. He no longer liked to be with his father in the yard, or to knit and talk through the winter evenings, but instead he disappeared as soon as he came home from school, and scraped busily upon his fiddle until his father called him to supper, and after then until he was sent to bed. Ole saw the fiddle as an enemy in his own home, a destroyer of the little happiness he enjoyed. The boy was too young to know what he was doing to his parent; he could think only in terms of violin. From somewhere he procured a ragged book of exercises and simple pieces, and by applying what he had learned in school about music, he soon discovered he might play them on his violin. The speed with which he got results from his instrument testified to his genius.

But Ole, besides being without musical knowledge of any kind at all, was tone deaf. The scrapings in his kitchen continued to be scrapings to him, even after the boy had achieved considerable skill in playing

his little melodies. The violin became more and more hateful in the old man's eyes; the very sight of it enraged him. But quite apart from all other considerations, the boy was not doing any work. Scraping a violin was not an activity which the father classified as work, and before long he began to feel it his duty as a parent to make the boy stop all his nonsense, and come back to the things which really mattered. He hated to disappoint the lad, but he was beginning to feel that in the best interests of his son, as well as in his own, the violin must go.

By this time, Sten had finished with his book of exercises, and had acquired another—somebody's discarded song book. Among the trash which made up most of the book, the boy found four good songs, and upon them, with astonishingly good taste, he seized. Since none of the music had been written for violin, he found it necessary to alter, sometimes to transpose into more suitable keys. Although he had no idea of what he was doing, he altered and transposed without much difficulty, and with good results.

Finally Ole could put up with it no longer, and decided that he would break a long-standing rule which he had made for himself, and go to see the boy's teacher. She was a pert young woman, freshly hatched from Normal School, but showed Ole the respect which she had been told she must show to parents, however stupid they appear to be. He explained to her, and she finally understood, that he was worried about the boy's spending so much time alone scratching the violin. The old man related how his son would sit for hours together by himself, neglecting everything, practising his fiddle. Hastily the pert young woman cast her mind back to what she could remember of her educational psychology, which had been inadequate to begin with, and was now in a hopeless state. She recalled something about the danger of children spending too much time by themselves, remembered something having been said about "joyous social activity" as the supreme height of human existence, and recommended that Ole take immediate steps to improve the situation, even if it involved destroying the violin.

For Ole, the problem was solved. He felt instinctively that the pert young teacher was not a person of very mature judgment, but since her opinion coincided with his own, he decided that she must have a certain wisdom about her. He went home to his shack feeling as he had not felt since the boy brought the violin.

The hated instrument was in its place beside the lad's bed. Ole did not wait to consider—he feared he might weaken—but cracked the cheap frame across his knee, and stuffed the two pieces into the stove. They burned very quickly, for the wood was old and dry.

At first the boy was heart-broken. He moped about the shack disconsolately, not bearing any ill-will towards Ole, but simply mourning the loss of his violin. Before very long, though, he began to recover, and in response to his father's repeated demands, went back to knitting and wood-carving. Ole was delighted to see the results of his handi-work, and when, in a month or so, the violin was a forgotten episode, he congratulated himself on having suppressed the disease before it had gone too far—which is precisely what he had done, for the boy was only ten, and impressionable. Sten never showed any more interest in music.

The pert young teacher, Miss Hodgins, was thrilled. She could now see what tremendous things might be done with a guidance programme, what fine results must come from good parent-teacher relations, and what worthwhile things a modern, scientific approach to education can achieve. She wrote a letter to her old professor at the Normal School, telling him of the child she had saved from schizophrenia—a child obviously in the last stages of withdrawing into himself, of becoming a burden to society and a trial to his teachers. The professor was charmed to think that his teaching was bearing such admirable fruit.

He read Miss Hodgins' letter to all his classes, as an example of what a good teacher can do for problem children, and then, since he liked Miss Hodgins, he bought her a recording of a Mozart quintet, and sent it along to her for Christmas.





PALACE OF THE DEAD

C. Heath





SUNSET FROM DECEPTION PASS.

By Jim Mackie.





CLOUDS AT SKOKIE.

By Jim Mackie.





ATTENTION.

Charlie Heath.



# From the Top of Chief Mountain

By WM. RODNEY

Seasonal Public Relations Officer, Waterton National Park

(Editor's note: Mr. Rodney is a student at Alberta University and his home is in Calgary. He has filled the position of public relations officer at Waterton National Park for the past two summer seasons).

Chief Mountain is located in the north-eastern portion of Glacier National Park, some three miles south of the International boundary. It is a solitary peak, rising abruptly out of the plains, and standing apart from the rest of the Lewis Range. Because of its solitary position it was called "The King" on the Arrowsmith map of 1796. In 1854 a James Doty, meteorologist at Lower Mary Lake, reported that the mountain was called Chief or King Mountain. Captain John Palliser, swinging south from what is now central Alberta, glimpsed the brooding peak, and described it in his famous report. In 1858, Lieutenant Thomas Blakiston, also a member of the Imperial Palliser Expedition, and the first man to map the Waterton Lakes National Park area, placed Chief Mountain at position about one-half mile in British territory. This surveying error was later corrected by the International Boundary Commission set up by the governments of Canada and the United States.

Today, Chief Mountain is more accessible than it was during the days of the early explorers, traders, and pioneers. It may be seen by travellers driving along the Chief Mountain International Highway, which links Waterton and Glacier National Parks together. It is "the mountain" to the peoples of Cardston and the surrounding district, for it stands supreme on the skyline, its buff-colored limestone walls splashed by the rays of the rising and setting sun.

Indian legends have always been a part of the history of Chief Mountain. Its unique position relative to the rest of the mountain range, and its sheer sides, combined to give it an air of mysterious aloofness that fitted with the superstitions of the

Blackfoot Confederation tribes. One story tells of a faithful wife of an heroic Blackfoot chief, who, in her grief over her husband's death in battle, hurled herself and her child from the peak. She was buried alongside her husband at the foot of the mountain, and the peak was named Ninah-Stahkoo, the Mountain of the Chief.

Henry L. Stimson, secretary for war in President Roosevelt's wartime cabinet, scaled the peak in 1891. His account of the climb tells of two stories that were common among the Indians of the region. One of these told of a young, adventurous Piegan brave who, while hunting with a band of his tribesmen near the base of the mountain, began to climb its sheer slopes. None of his companions dared to follow him. He climbed higher and higher, until at last he passed out of sight of the watching band below. They waited for his return for many days, but in vain, for he never returned. It was said that he had met the Spirit of the Mountain who, resenting anyone trespassing on his property, hurled him from the peak. The Piegans, being essentially a nomadic plains tribe, and not much at home in the mountains, placed much faith in the story, and shunned the peak, respecting it as the home of the mountain spirit.

\* \* \*

Another story tells of a Flathead warrior who successfully reached the top, and dared the wrath of the Mountain God. The Flatheads, a mountain tribe to the west, were accustomed to the moody weather, the lonely valleys, and the towering peaks of the mountains. One of their warriors, a man of unusual strength and with many daring exploits to his credit, confessed on his death bed that he had climbed the peak secretly in his youth. Carrying a sacred buffalo skull, he had travelled eastward across the intervening mountain ranges until he arrived at the base of the towering peak. Then, with his precious burden on his back, he started up its vertical sides. The climb was a struggle against unseen

forces that plucked at his arms and legs; the dark walls seemed to rise endlessly into the sky. At last, he reached the summit. There, for four days and four nights, he fasted, chanting his warrior songs, and offering his peace pipe to the Spirit of the Mountains. For three nights the Spirit appeared before him, threatening to hurl him from the peak unless he returned to the plains below. Each time, the Flathead warrior refused, and held his ground. Finally, on the fourth night, the Spirit relented, smoked the peace pipe with him, and became his protector for the rest of his days. When Stimson reached the summit he found "the old Flathead's pillow" safely anchored by rocks on the highest point. It was, according to his account, one of the oldest skulls he had ever seen, rotted away by the elements until only the frontal bone and the horn stubs remained. He and his companion, a Piegan Indian named Billy, left the skull where they found it.

\* \* \*

These legends, along with other thoughts, were at the back of my mind when Bruce Law and I started on Saturday, August 28. Perhaps it was the challenge of its sheer sides, or the unrivalled view from the top that gradually crystallized the idea of scaling it, into an actual attempt. The day agreed upon for the climb dawned beautifully clear. Within an hour and a half we had driven from Waterton, were cleared through the customs, and had reached the Slide Lake ranger cabin, directly south and below the peak. We began to climb at 10:20, striking out in a northwesterly direction towards the lower reaches of the peak. The initial part of the climb took us through a burnt over section of forest littered with deadfall. As we climbed higher the naked and the dead of the forest gave way to the cool green stands of pine and spruce. The slopes were brightened by the brilliant colors of mountain flowers and shrubs. Scarlet Indian paintbrush brought to mind the legends associated with Chief Mountain. Purple asters and gaillardia daubed the slopes with deep purple and brilliant yellow. A wood grouse watched quizzically from the top of a log as we wound our way upwards.

The peak was obscured for the greater part of the climb through the wooded sec-

tion. Suddenly, it appeared before us, framed by the spruce and pine trees of the forest growth. In a few minutes the forest lay behind us, and we entered that completely different world above the timberline. Great, sharp-edged limestone fragments littered the base of a rising alpine meadow. The stones looked like the careless scatterings from a giant's hand, playthings from some forgotten, distant age. At the top of the meadow we stopped for lunch, looked out across the valley floor from where we had started. As we started up the long shale-covered slope a whistling marmot piped us on our way. It was reasonably hard going over the loose shale. For every forward step taken, half the distance was lost sliding backwards. Nevertheless, we climbed steadily upwards, stopping occasionally for breath, and to look across the broad valleys beginning to unfold before our eyes. Gradually, the Land of the Shining Mountains began to make itself visible. The Slide Lakes sparkled in the distance; the Mokowan or Belly River wound its way serpent-like through the thick carpet of green vegetation covering the slopes.

\* \* \*

By half past one, I reached the vertical wall that forms the crest of Chief Mountain. Being in somewhat better physical condition than my companion, I was some distance ahead of him. I started up the rock wall alone. As I climbed upward the ledges became narrower, the hand and footholds smaller, less secure, and harder to find. Suddenly, they seemed to disappear altogether, and I was suspended on the side of the cliff, the walls towering above me. Looking down, then upwards, the peak seemed to be pushing downwards and outwards against me, an illusion heightened by the drifting cumulous clouds a few thousand feet above. It was impossible to go farther without ropes and mountaineering equipment. I retraced my steps and found a narrow ledge leading around the cliff to the western end of the peak. In half an hour I had worked my way around the end, climbed upwards, and reached the narrow, table-like top of the peak. Two clefts, each about thirty feet deep, separated me from the cairn indicating the highest point. After a few minutes of climbing I reached the

boundary marker, and located the handbook left by the previous party of mountaineers. Only one other party of climbers had scaled the peak this year, a group of seven from Seattle. Their names were recorded in a book left in a small tin can, covered over by the rocks that form the cairn. There was a touch of humor on the cairn for the boundary marker clearly stated that there was a \$250 fine for damaging or removing the metal plate. It would have taken a good deal of prying to loosen the round metal plate, for it was firmly set in concrete on a large piece of limestone. In addition to indicating the amount of the fine, the marker showed the four cardinal points of the compass, and listed the height of Chief Mountain as 9,056 feet above sea level. As I was sitting on the cairn writing our names in the record book, my companion came into sight. In a few moments we were looking out over the countryside, picking out the most prominent visible landmarks.

\* \* \*

The view was all we had anticipated. The great plains that were once blackened by vast herds of buffalo, stretched away from the base of the mountain, and finally disappeared into the haze of the horizon. Below, the Chief Mountain Highway wound its way around the base, and cars, looking like swiftly moving ants, sped along its way, their windows and roof-tops flashing in the bright sunshine. West northwest we could see the customs buildings, and two flags flying on both sides of the border. Despite a slight haze, we were able to pick out the white elevator at Lethbridge, while Cardston, marked by the Mormon Temple, seemed only a short distance away through the binoculars.

As we stood there looking across the plains the whole historical past of Southern Alberta seemed to merge and blend. In the distance, the Sweet Grass Hills, that jutting landmark, used by the wolfers, traders, and whisky runners as a datum on their journey from Fort Benton towards Fort Whoop-up, Fort Standoff, and the relatively untouched regions of Southern Alberta, appeared as a dark purple smudge on the horizon. Looking out across the rolling table land it was not hard to once again picture the Blackfoot tribes following the buffalo herds, their teepees gracing the skyline; or to visualize Whoop-up and Slide-out, centres of lawlessness until the coming of the Mounted Police in 1874. Nor was it difficult to imagine the early explorers and fur traders, inching their way by canoe, by foot, and on horseback across those very plains, soon to be followed by the covered wagons of the pioneers. With the advance of the railroad, and the influx of cattlemen and farmers, the old forts were transformed into prosperous, bustling pioneer towns. Looking north towards the old Calgary Trail, once the highway for the slow-moving, noisy bull trains, we could see the geometrically-shaped wheat farms, their boundaries the section lines, running north and south. And on the horizon, midway between Waterton and Pincher Creek, the Gulf Oil Company derricks seemed more than ever to indicate that the old west is now history, and at the same time, to herald the advancing future. These and other thoughts were still turning over in my mind as we started down the mountainside. The descent took only half the time taken to make the climb, and we reached the car tired but pleased with the unexpectedly easy conquest.

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# Herbert Slivver and the Laws of Refraction

by J. McFetridge

Herbert Slivver did not know quite what to do when he first got the spectacles.

He almost burst out with the news the first night he tried them on, after he had helped Matilda with the dishes, hoed the flower beds in front and the vegetable garden in the rear of their tiny house, and had emptied the garbage using the Matilda-approved method. Matilda always nagged him about the number of weeds in the garden, and this night was no exception. She had gotten out her old argument that he had nothing to do all day but sit on a stool in the Bank, and fill some figures into a book under the watchful eye of Mr. Travis, so why couldn't he do a little manual labor around the house? And, besides, didn't she toil and slave all day keeping up the house and buying the groceries and doing the washing and scrubbing? Herbert couldn't remember a day that Matilda hadn't nagged him about something, and he sometimes thought, with a tinge of surprise, that they must have at one time been newly-weds, full of the human emotions that Matilda was always reading about in the "True Romances" magazine she always bought.

As he hung up his hoe, Herbert thought that sometime he might make a surrealist painting that would illustrate the way he saw his past life as he looked back at it. The picture would have a narrow, straight road stretching off to a pin-point on the horizon of a flat, uninteresting plain. The road would be paved with large, square sheets from a ledger and on the alternate blocks, stretching from the perspective to the horizon, would be piles of supper dishes sitting gracefully on neatly ruffled, wet tea-towels. The whole scene would be lit to a dull red by a huge sun in the empty sky—the face of Mr. Travis, looking down

on the ledger-sheet road. Herbert couldn't think of any way he might represent his forty-five years in the same Bank, and his forty years of married life.

He wiped his feet carefully and came in the back door to the kitchen as quietly as he could, being careful not to let the screen door slam. He paused for a moment, inside the door, in a panic lest he had not hung the hoe up the way Matilda liked it placed, then, reassuring himself that it was all right, he hung his old cardigan carefully in the cellar-way. Stretching some of the stiffness from his arms, he tiptoed carefully toward the front room, being careful to step around the squeaky board in the kitchen floor lest Matilda start nagging about getting that fixed.

The new glasses had arrived from the optometrist's that morning, and Matilda had placed the box beside the newspaper on the end table beside his chair. Herbert had seen it there when he had come from the Bank, but he decided not to look at them until he had his various chores done because he knew that Matilda had not been too pleased about his getting the new glasses. He looked nervously at his wife as she shook her magazine straight, but she was lost in the lines of print in front of her, and Herbert opened the box, hoping against hope that she had not chosen the heavy black frames with the straight ear-pieces that she had seemed to like at the optometrist's. He felt a brief pang of satisfaction to see that the frames were the same as the twelve-year-old pair he had on. He glanced nervously again at Matilda, but she read on as if he weren't even alive, much less in the same room. He removed his old glasses and placed them on the end-table, closed his eyes as he placed the new ones in the wrinkles worn in his nose



and put the ear-pieces in place, then opened his eyes to take his first look at the world through his new medium.

Herbert looked, Herbert gulped in unbelief, and Herbert looked again. Everything was upside-down.

There sat Matilda in the centre of his world, her magazine in her lap, the reading lamp shining over her shoulder, the doilies neatly in place on the arms of her chair, the picture on the wall behind her dimly visible outside the circle of light cast by the lamp — just as he had seen it a moment before, except that Matilda and the lamp and the chair, and even the doilies were upside-down. Down where the floor should be was the ceiling, the crack in the plaster running across from where his feet should be to where Matilda's had been a moment before. And where the ceiling had been was Matilda and Matilda's front room, hanging upside down. Herbert gulped again and became aware that Matilda's upside-down eyes were fixed on him under her upside-down magazine, so he picked up his paper, opened it with an apologetic smile, and hid his face in the sports page. It was upside-down too. Herbert shut his eyes quickly, then opened them a crack and peered forth. The sports page was still upside-down, so he just closed his eyes and sat there, trying to think how he would tell Matilda.

The world is full of self-sufficient people who can take the reversals life offers without turning a hair, keep right on living in the same old way, keeping their bewilderment and confusion to themselves. Herbert Slivver was definitely not such a person, at least until the time he put on those glasses. Everything that happened to Herbert he told Matilda, because she always found out anyway, and the delay did not decrease her natural suspicion of all his actions. So he just shut his eyes for a moment and, as far as Matilda knew, read the sports page. Herbert just sat there, thinking very hard that if he had told her what they did to his vision she would take them back and maybe next time she would choose those heavy black rims with the straight ear-pieces. He imagined the look of horror on Mr. Travis' face if he saw his chief ledger-keeper walk into the bank like a devaluated Ernie Bevan, heavy with

glasses. The thought of Mr. Travis' horror made Herbert feel weak. He peeked out at the sports page again and it was still inverted, so he looked past the corner of the paper at the scene before him and found that he liked the look of Matilda and her furniture in their incongruous position. It was the first different and refreshing scene he had looked on since he had been married. Besides, Matilda in the setting of her inverted front room looked far less formidable than Herbert could remember her. He looked again at the crack in the ceiling at his feet, and the resolve to keep the glasses grew in his chicken heart. His resolve was still forming when at ninety-three Matilda stood down, placed the "True Romances" under the end-table by her chair, thus signalling that the household was about to retire.

Herbert did not know what to do about walking around the new world he found himself in because the ceiling was so far below him, but he rose from his chair, obedient to Matilda's signal, and stepped out bravely. Everything worked fine, except that he found that he had to keep his head well back to see the floor so he wouldn't bump his head on the furniture. He locked an inverted back door, put out an inverted cat and milk bottle on a front step with a large expanse of evening sky under it, locked the front door and got to bed right on schedule. Just before he turned out his light he took off the glasses to place them carefully beside the alarm clock, and the awful familiarity of the old world that crowded in on him strengthened his resolve to keep the glasses and say nothing to Matilda.

In the next two and one-half weeks Herbert found himself trying to remember the lines he had once memorized in school, something about magic casements opening on perilous seas in fairy land forlorn, because he found a new existence, the magic of which was beyond his description. The trip to the office each morning was no longer a series of cracked sidewalk blocks and curbs, people's hurrying feet, and shop windows he had seen a thousand times. He floated in a blood-tingling world that was fresh sky, criss-crossed by wires and poles that seemed to him like the rigging of a mighty ship. The glint of the top leaves

of the boulevard trees in the sunlight, the spires of the buildings, the swift flocks of pigeons in the air, the soft marshmallow of the clouds were Herbert's new world, and he regarded the upside-down streets with their hurrying people as a boundary design of quaint interest. Sometimes he would look idly at the neatness of the upside-down buildings, the crowds with eyes fixed on the sidewalk above them and would feel an urge to stop the people and let them look through the glasses into his magic world. But Matilda's powers were far-reaching, and he kept his secret to himself.

The morning following the first wearing of the glasses Herbert had awakened certain that it had all been a weird dream.

---

## *You Matter, I Matter*

I passed a lonely dog in the night,  
little and lost;  
and the night was no longer beautiful,  
but cold and cruel.

I saw millions of stars in the night,  
and then one fell;  
and the night was no longer starlit,  
but dark and drear.

We pass thousands of people in our lives,  
and their eyes watch;  
they presume to judge, unfeeling, all we do,  
and we heed them.

Oh, listen to me:  
One dog, one star;  
Thousands don't matter;  
You matter, I matter;  
thousands don't.

Vye Ulasovetz.

---

But there by the bed were the glasses, and he fitted them with closed eyes, afraid to look. Sure enough, when he opened them, there was the bedroom upside-down. He wore the glasses to breakfast, barely able to conceal his excitement under his usual meek exterior. The handling of the upside-down dishes was somewhat difficult at first and he found Matilda looking annoyed when he persisted in reaching upward to put his coffee cup in his saucer. But he

got through the meal without serious incident, helped Matilda with the dishes and set out on his ten-minute walk to the Bank in a world as full of interest and amazement as that of a six-year-old.

He found, as he let himself into the Bank and floated across to the men's cloakroom, that like Matilda, Mr. Travis had suffered a sea-change into something rich and strange. An inverted Mr. Travis, in an inverted setting of desks, ledgers and frosted glass was not, certainly not, formidable.

He changed into his old steel rims during working hours, but escaped into his new world each afternoon at quitting time. As the weeks passed a subtle change began to come over Herbert Slivver. His new monarchy in a world uninhabited except by himself began to breathe new life into his meek and retiring spirit. His step became lighter, his outlook brighter, and one day he even caught himself humming over his journals and ledgers until he felt the puzzled gaze of Mr. Travis on the back of his neck. Herbert turned and smiled airily into the Manager's astounded face, then resumed his humming and his ledgers.

If Mr. Travis was astounded at the antics of his chief ledger keeper, so was Matilda Slivver as the days went by. His irresponsible attitude to the garden hose (he had left it out for two nights), his unconcern for the weeds in the vegetable garden, his failure to empty the garbage or go to bed at the appointed signal at nine-thirty, caused Matilda some concern. She found him growing less and less impressed with her management of affairs, and tending to just go for a walk in the evenings when she had so much planned for him. The new Herbert even desisted bravely when she rattled the dishes in the sink, and despite herself, she began to find that in a vague way the new Herbert pleased her. But she kept the pleasure to herself, and resolved to have a talk with Mr. Travis, who, meantime, was complaining to his wife that Slivver kept looking at him as if he was just a fly crawling around on the ceiling.

The third day of the third week after Herbert had discovered what his new glasses did to his eyes, the Bank examiners walked in, unexpected as usual. Ordinarily,

this would have been enough to scare Herbert into a week's inability to eat breakfast, but strangely enough this morning, his only feelings were those of pity for Mr. Travis, who looked extremely nervous. Herbert had known for some time that Mr. Travis was making a little extra money on the foreign exchange the Bank was handling, and he settled down to a battle of figures with the hawk-eyed, silent men, while a fluttering Mr. Travis watched the dissection of the Bank's books as a murderer might watch the post-mortem on his victim. By noon, Herbert began to feel that he could no longer keep the discrepancy under cover, but as they worked into the afternoon and evening it at last became clear that Mr. Travis' sins were to go unmarked. Herbert noted the pasty color of Mr. Travis' usually florid face during that afternoon, and made a mental note to make a corresponding change in the projected surrealistic painting.

It was late that night when he stood outside the darkened office with a shaken Mr. Travis, who interrupted profuse thanks

long enough to offer Herbert a ride home. Herbert declined with thanks, for the night sky through his new glasses was even more beautiful than the scenes by day. As he began to walk homeward through the freshness of the night air, he watched the silver orb of the moon and the galaxy of stars sweep downwards under his feet as he put on the new glasses. So lost was he in the beauty of the night that his foot failed to clear a sidewalk block, he tripped and fell to his knees, and his precious glasses catapulted from his nose to smash into a thousand pieces on the cement. For a long minute he remained on his knees, gazing myopically at the world as it really was, and then a new strength seemed to flow into him, and he rose and went on.

\* \* \*

Herbert ate his warmed-over supper in silence, and after he finished his meal, he went out the back door, making sure he let it slam behind him. As he walked down the gravel walk beside the house toward the street he heard Matilda rattling the dishes in the sink.

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# Writers' Workshops In Alberta

by  
Milwyn Adams Davies



This article is intended to help those people in Alberta who feel that they have the ability to write and have something to write about. Many people sit down to a typewriter and write a story or an article which they feel is as good as anything they have read in a magazine. To their surprise it is returned with no comment except a printed form expressing the editor's regret. After several such rejections the writer begins to feel discouraged. Very often there is nothing wrong with the idea of the story, article or play. It is the manner in which it is presented that is wrong.

Books have been written on the art of writing. Some of them are very good. Few people, however, have the capacity for self-criticism even when the books lay down rules for the purpose. Universities have courses in writing. Newspapers advertise expensive courses guaranteed to help the student to a ready market. Agents advertise their willingness to criticize manuscripts for a consideration. There are many people, however, who are unable to avail themselves of these opportunities, but who feel a great desire for help. It is for such as these that the Writers' Workshop was designed. ....

The writer of this article was able to find only four of these workshops in Alberta. None of them have been established for any length of time, yet they have accomplished a great deal. For they have done away with the fallacy that anyone can sit down and write for publication with the ease with which one writes a letter to a familiar friend. There may be

people like that, but the members of the workshops have discovered that writing is a craft mastered slowly. Just as a jeweller takes an unpolished stone and works slowly and persistently until he has a gem, smooth, glittering and perfect, so a writer must take the words that seem to come so easily and cull and polish them until the finished product is worthy of any editor's setting.

As there is only one workshop in Northern Alberta we will take that one first. The Edmonton Writers' Workshop is an offshoot of the Canadian Authors' Association. It was organized in the fall of 1946. Its average membership was ten. Meetings were held twice monthly in the upstairs of the South Side Library. The Workshop was developed to assist aspiring writers in the preparation of manuscripts for publication. It was a voluntary organization with no fees, no chairman, no secretary. All that was necessary for membership was the desire to be a writer. Manuscripts were read by one person who was selected at each meeting and took the place of a chairman. Criticism was quite severe and generally well accepted. This organization still functions during the months between April and September. In 1947 it was decided to obtain the services of a teacher during the winter months. During that time the Workshop has met with success. Many of the students have had articles and stories published by eastern publications. There is a large output of work by most of the members and as time goes on the membership dwindles until only those who have prospects of publica-



tion remain in the Workshop. In a contest sponsored by the U. of A. magazine STET, four out of six awards were won by members of this Workshop. Scholarships to the Banff School of Fine Arts were awarded in 1948 and 1949. The winner of the Banff School of Fine Arts Writers' Scholarship contest was a member of the Workshop. Lists of markets are available to every member and difficulties with markets are threshed out. New writers find this feature particularly helpful. New members are always welcome. The Workshop has a chairman and secretary now. Miss Nan Clegg, Secretary of the Authors' Association and Convenor of the Workshop, is always willing and eager to help beginners, who will receive a warm welcome to the group provided they have some talent and the definite desire to work hard. Mr. W. Everard Edmonds is the Workshop mentor this season.

The Calgary Workshop is a part of the Allied Arts Council, and has its headquarters at the Coste House. Mr. A. F. Keys conducts classes in writing. The Allied Arts Council is conducting an unique experiment in the arts and does not devote all its efforts to writing, but tries to correlate music, painting, drama and writing. This Workshop has been active since 1945. Classes have been given in story-writing, playwriting and feature writing. Some success has been achieved by individuals in all these fields. As in the Edmonton group, some time is devoted to the preparation of manuscripts and to markets. The Calgary Workshop has concentrated on the writing and producing of radio plays and has been sponsored by the Henry Birks Co. during the last two seasons. The plays are heard over one of the Calgary stations. This group has a distinct advantage in the writing of all kinds of plays since there is space at all times in the Coste House where writers can come together, not only to read their plays but also to rehearse them. In this way the weaknesses of their efforts can be discovered very quickly and the writer does not go on making the same old errors time after time. An effort is being made this year to develop a three-act play contest in connection with the Western Theatre Conference and the Dominion Drama League. As this idea origi-

nated with Mr. Keys, he is paying special attention this season to this particular form of writing.

Lethbridge is the centre of two groups with almost identical aspirations. In 1945 a Southern Alberta Writers' Club was formed with headquarters in Lethbridge. This association has a membership of fifteen or twenty people who live in a widely scattered area south of the Bow River. This club meets three or four times a year. Members meet largely to discuss things of interest to people who write, to discuss markets and to receive and give criticism of the work that has been done since the last meeting. These are people who live in isolated districts and feel the need for help whenever it can be obtained. The original purpose of the organization was to preserve the early history of this section of the country, which is richly storied.

The Lethbridge Writers' Workshop grew out of this group and consists of people living in the town itself. It meets on the last Friday of each month from the beginning of September to the end of June. The membership has varied from six to ten people. This group has strict rules and membership is dependent on adherence to them. No one is allowed to attend a meeting without a script. In order to give direction to the work in hand a topic is given at each meeting and members are expected to hand in scripts dealing with it at the next meeting. The medium is their own choice. The scripts are read aloud, notes are made and the criticism is quite severe. Sensitive souls are not invited. The result is very salutary. A number of stories have been sold to magazines and favourable criticism was received of scripts entered in a nation-wide contest. One theme which produced a variety of scripts was "Fear versus Greed." The members themselves were amazed at the versatility and power of the scripts received. One project which has occupied the attention of this group for a period of time is the collecting and recording of the early history of this part of the country in the form of stories, articles and sketches. This term the Workshop is concentrating on Juveniles. A new member studied this form at Columbia University, and will give some direction to the concerted effort. As this is a special

market some time will be devoted to the study of Juvenile magazines and to their particular requirements. One member, who has had a story published which dealt with the subject of racial tolerance, has written a series of fairy stories and hopes that this winter's work will result in their publication. Mrs. Freda Smith Muddiman, 508-5th Avenue South, is the Secretary and will welcome any enquiries.

The fourth Writers' Workshop is to be found in Banff. The procedure adopted by this group is very similar to that adopted by the other groups already reviewed. The insistence is upon sincerity and the achievement of professional status in writing. Some of the members have been very successful in their work and have had stories published in magazines. Some of these stories have been broadcast by Bernie Brayden. Since Banff is a holiday resort the time devoted to meetings is very short but an intensive effort toward production and criticism is made during that time.

There is a great diversity of talent in this group and plays written by members have been produced.

The criterion in all the workshops is sincerity and the possession of definite talent. The dilettante with a false value of "art for art's sake" is not encouraged. In the majority of them only the hardy souls with a burning desire to write can survive. The Welsh have a proverb "Haiarn a hoga haiarn (Steel sharpens steel)". It was the motto of a writing group to which I belonged in my youth. It is, I think, the subconscious motto of all these workshops. The steel of sincere and worthwhile criticism will sharpen the edge of all endeavour.

We hope that in the future there will be many more workshops in Alberta; that they will keep their standards high and give that much needed fillip to Canadian literature which is still a-borning. May their membership achieve individual success in a field to which they give their efforts as pioneers of Alberta literary endeavour.



# SHOWDOWN

» » » » By CLIFFORD SHELTON

Tom Twain joined the line-up before the post-office wicket. He hooked his thumbs into his belt, and leaned forward to count those ahead of him. Three, he concluded, were not so many. He chewed patiently on an oat straw while ruminating upon the passage of events which had brought him into town for his mail instead of waiting two days for it to be taken out to his farm by rural delivery. A couple of days, he figured, could make a world of difference in his affair with Pat Higgins. He heaved on his belt until his jeans were tight on his slender thighs, and pushed a little against the man in front.

"Who do you think you're pushing?" snapped the guy in front, turning to glare up into his face.

"Ain't pushin'," returned Tom smoothly,

"just stretchin' my limbs." The challenging blue of his eyes, and the firmness of his jaw disconcerted the townsman, who shrugged his pudgy shoulders with disdain.

"A farmer," he said, "ought to wait for his mail. That's what we got rural deliveries for."

"Not mail like I'm gettin'," replied Tom.

The townsman peered up into his face. It was a handsome face, reddened by wind and sun, but the townsman didn't like it. "You're Tom Twain, aren't you?" he asked.

"Tain't nobody else," Tom acknowledged.

"Then I reckon Pat Higgins hasn't much to worry about."

Tom bit the straw in two, and spat the pieces at the feet of the townsman. His lips narrowed into a thin, straight line. "After I get my mail tonight, Pat Higgins

is goin' wish he was never born."

The other man sniggered. "Take my advice, and stay out of town till the whole thing blows over." He pushed a fat and stubby finger against Tom's new plaid, catalogue shirt. "Pat Higgins will get you the first move you make. You haven't a chance. He's quicker than a rattlesnake."

"Yeh," returned Tom. "I ain't so slow myself." He looked past the other. "Now move along, eggnog, it's your turn," and placing his palm against the small of the townsman's back, he pushed him, protesting, up to the wicket.

The townsman disposed of, the postmaster squinted over his spectacles at Tom Twain. "Well, danged if it ain't Tom Twain," he ejaculated in his nasal falsetto. "Ain't seen you since you sent off your postal note." A twinkle of good natured derision crept into his faded blue eyes. "Day before yesterday, wasn't it?"

Tom sidled close to the wicket. Bending to peep through the aperture, he grinned. "Some day, you're goin' to be sorry you stuck your whiskery face through this 'ere hole in the wall, 'cause a stranger's gonna see it, and set a trap for a muskrat." He laid a strong, slim hand against the side of the wicket, and looked along the pigeon holes on the back wall until his eye fixed on the one initialled T. "Did it come?" he asked.

The postmaster shook his head.

"You ain't looked," Tom insisted.

The other spat a liquid stream of Virginia plug into the can beside the stove, then riffled through the contents of pigeon-hole T. "You could've seen it from there," he grumbled. "It ain't had time."

Tom shook his head, and shuffled his feet.

The postmaster leaned against the wicket. "Why don't you forget it, Tom? Pat Higgins ain't worth the trouble." He cleared his throat noisily. "I've been in this one horse town nigh on forty years. I've seen 'em come and go, and this guy's as slick as they come."

"I ain't scared of nobody," Tom muttered.

"I know that, but you don't have to meet him. You can bide your time, and maybe he'll drift out of town."

Tom looked about the deserted post of-

fice, then leaned confidentially toward the old man. "I'm hankerin' to meet him, especially after what he said about me down in Hank's store the other night. When there's nothin' big at stake I ain't so quick, but no city guy's comin' in 'ere, and talkin' loud like he's doing without me challengin' him." His jaw was clamped tight, his mouth a hard, straight line. "I aim to get him, and get him good."

"He's tough, Tom. I've seen him." The postmaster pushed his tongue into his cheek, and looked bird-like at Tom.

Tom grunted. "I can take him. He may be best where he comes from, but out here—I'm best." He rested his hands on his narrow hips. "I ain't lettin' no city slicker take me for nothin'."

The postmaster nodded vigorously.

Tom's shoulders sagged slightly. "I wish my parcel had come. When I seen that magazine advertisement, I realized right away I needed something extra good to get this guy, but I wanted a couple days practice."

The postmaster reached behind a stack of papers. "You'd go through with it even if you'd got nothin' but what you've used before, wouldn't you, Tom?" He jerked his glasses off, glared at Tom, then replaced them. "I know danged well you would, though I was hopin' you wouldn't. Well—here it is!" He thrust a long, slim parcel into Tom's hand. "I'll be in Hank's store when you meet him, and remember, you've got friends behind you."

As he was leaving the post office, Tom heard himself hailed from across the street, and his face brightened as he saw the young woman who had called to him. Since an evening three months ago, when he had bought her basket at the school social, he had been escorting her to the local picnics and dances.

He strode toward her, taking in the trim neatness of her tweed suit, the funny little hat she wore, and the books under her arm. "A right pretty school m'arm," he had confided to the postmaster three months ago. He brushed his hand across his hat brim as he confronted her.

"Whatever are you doing in town at this hour?" she asked.

"Gettin' my mail," he returned with a smile.



She twinkled her eyes. "Letters?" she teased.

He tapped his hip pocket. "More important. I've got something that's goin' to put Pat Higgins where he belongs."

She became serious. "He's the new teller in the bank, isn't he?"

"Yeh."

She placed her hand on his arm. "You've got some sort of feud on with him, haven't you? Out here the people take themselves so seriously. At the drop of a hat you're ready to jump on someone."

Tom shrugged his shoulders. "He ain't dropped no hat, Clara, but he's careless in his remarks, and I aim to corner him in Hank's store come Saturday night. It's goin' to be him or me."

"Then it must be you, Tom. But, be careful. Watch every move he makes." She looked up into his face, her blue eyes wide and serious.

He tapped his pocket. "I've got what I need, right here. He's goin' to be quiet as a dead rooster when I've done with him." He lifted his hat, and stepped off the sidewalk. "I'm calculatin' to practise a couple of days—then I'll be comin' back."

When he turned at the end of the street to look back at her, she waved to him.

Saturday night, Hank's store was crowded. Hank, a big, bald headed Swede, perspired freely as he served a stream of customers, while at the rear of the store, townsmen and farmers vied for standing

room about a small table. It was toward this group that Tom Twain pushed his way, and as he went, acquaintances slapped him on the back, and called his name. He approached the table, and the group melted away to leave him facing the man seated there. Tom surveyed him with insolent eyes, hands on his hips, feet wide apart. He took in the thin, fallow face; the long, nervous fingers. He instantly disliked the man's impeccable grey suit, and sleek hair.

"Pat Higgins," he said, "I reckon we've got somethin' to settle right here and now." He sidled closer as the other half rose from his chair. "I've been champion in this town for the last five years, and no city gent is goin' to dispute it until he's danged well earned the right."

"Where I come from, Mr. Twain," Pat Higgins replied smoothly, and with an unfriendly smile, "we make our play, then talk. From my own observation, Mr. Twain, you are not champion material. A champion must keep pace with the times—must learn all the new angles."

Tom's hand strayed to his hip pocket, and pushed down on a long, slim book; but not before Hank, crowding in behind him, read its title: "New Angles on An Old Game—Checkers."

The crowd milled around as Hank placed the checkers on the board.

"Take your pick," Tom invited as he straddled the chair opposite Pat Higgins. "Red or black. Blacks move first as always."

## Town Planning Contest Winners

Our congratulations go to the following winners in our essay contest, "Town Planning to Meet Alberta's Present and Future Problems"—

First Prize: Mr. Harold L. Morrison, 11620 Edinboro Road, Edmonton.

Second Prize: Miss Mary L. Imrie, 10360 Connaught Drive.

Third Prize: Mr. H. S. Ragan, 9755 - 86 Avenue.

Honorable Mention: Miss Dorothy Stevens, 509 - 24th Avenue W., Calgary.

Judges in the contest were: The Hon. A. J. Hooke, Minister of Economic Affairs, Dr. E. P. Scarlett, of Calgary, and Professor M. H. Long, of the Department of History, University of Alberta.

We appreciate the interest shown by all entrants, and we hope that those who were not successful this time will find another opportunity in our next STET contest.

# *The Work of Historical Societies*

W. Everard Edmonds  
Secretary, Historical  
Society of Alberta

In reading "I Wanted to Write," the recently published autobiography of Kenneth Roberts, one is struck by the immense amount of historical research that the author engaged in before he undertook to write such notable works of fiction as "Oliver Wiswell" and "Rabble in Arms." In the carefully documented account of his progress in the literary field, Mr. Roberts pays a warm tribute to the work done by historical societies; and justly so, for these organizations supply much of the warp and woof out of which historical fiction is made. It is doubtless for this reason that the editor of STET has asked me to write a brief note on the work of historical societies in Canada.

Among these, the Quebec Literary and Historical Society must be given a foremost place. It has served as a model for many younger societies, and has lived up to the ideal set before its members at the time of its organization: "To discover and rescue from the unsparing hand of time the records which yet remain of the earliest history of Canada—to preserve, while in our power, such documents as may be found amid the dust of yet unexplored depositaries, and which may prove important to general history, and to the particular history of the province."

In the Maritimes, first place must be given to the Nova Scotia Historical Society, founded in 1878. It has done, and is still doing, much excellent work, as may be seen from a perusal of the Society's "Collections" published from year to year.

In Ontario, the leading historical society is the Ontario Historical Society, which was incorporated in 1899. The primary object of this organization was to unite the various pioneer local societies into one central association.

Many of these smaller societies have much good work to their credit. Most of them are county organizations which restrict their efforts to their own particular localities. One of the youngest of these

Ontario local societies is the Thunder Bay Historical Society, founded in 1909. This organization has made a specialty of collecting historical material relating to the North West Company, which had its western headquarters at Fort William.

The Historical Society of Alberta, whose work should be of particular interest to STET readers and writers, is two years older than the Fort William organization, having been incorporated by provincial statute in the year 1907. The chief aims of the society are stated in Article I of the constitution as follows:

The object of the society shall be to encourage the study of the history of Alberta and Canada; to rescue from oblivion memories of the original inhabitants, the early missionaries, fur traders, explorers and settlers of the north and west of Canada; to obtain and preserve narratives in print, manuscript, or otherwise, of their travels, adventures, labours and observations; to secure and preserve minerals, archaeological curiosities and objects generally illustrative of the civil, religious, and natural history of the country; and to establish a museum and library.

Since its reorganization after the war, when local committees were formed in the various electoral districts throughout the province, the Society has been particularly active. Through the courtesy of the Department of Economic Affairs, a pamphlet entitled "History is a Mosaic" was published for the guidance of these local committees. Monthly meetings, open to the public, have been held at the University of Alberta. More than twenty manuscripts have been received and placed in the provincial archives.

During the past year the Executive has endeavored to call the attention of the Provincial Government to the advisability of protecting certain areas of historic interest in Alberta. Among these are the

"Mystic Cave" in Southern Alberta, the dinosaur field near Grande Prairie, some buildings still standing on the site of Fort Dunvegan, and certain others erected for military purposes at the time of the North West Rebellion.

In conjunction with the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers Association, the Historical Society of Alberta arranged the program for the unveiling of the memorial, erected by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, in honor of the "Preservation of the Plains Buffalo." The memorial stands in Elk Island National Park, and the unveiling ceremonies were witnessed by a thousand people on Labor Day, September 5th, 1949.

Perhaps the most important project initiated by the Society during recent months has been the movement for the restoration of old Fort Edmonton. Conferences have been held with municipal, provincial, and federal government officials, and estimates are now being prepared of the cost of such restoration.

These, then, are a few of the phases of the work of historical societies. There is no doubt whatever in my own mind that those societies now engaged in activities which have a real meaning for the communities which they serve are making an important contribution to the general welfare, and are meeting with an appreciation that justifies their existence.



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To create in Alberta a cultural magazine, and an opportunity at home for aspiring Alberta writers and artists.

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